

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT CAIRO 7257 ACTIONSECSTATE INFO LONDON
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S E C R E T CAIRO 07257

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OCLR US EG
SUBJECT: NUCLEAR POWERED WARSHII (NPW) TRANSIT OF THE
- SUEZ CANAL--TALK WITH FONMIN KAMEL

REF: (A) CAIRO 7166, (B) STATE 23171

SUMMARY: DISCUSSED REF SUBJECT WITH FONMIN KAMEL AND HIS
SENIOR AIDES AND GAVE THEM COPY OF AIDE MEMOIRE BASED ON
PARA 5, REF B. EMPHASIZED OUR VIEW FREE PASSAGE OF
WARSHIPS, REGARDLESS OF MEANS OF PROPULSION, GUARANTEED
BY CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION. TO ALLEVIATE GOE CONCERN
RE SAFETY, I POINTED OUT EXEMPLARY SAFETY RECORD OF U.S.
NPW'S AND UNILATERAL ASSURANCE WHICH USG PREPARED TO
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PROVIDE IN FORM OF STANDARD STATEMENT. U.S. NPW'S, I
NOTED, FREELY TRANSIT PANAMA CANAL. URGED THAT KAMEL
JOIN WITH GAMASY IN SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION TO HIS
MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES THAT U.S. NPW'S BE PERMITTED
FREE PASSAGE THROUGH CANAL SUBJECT APPROPRIATE UNILATERAL
ASSURANCE SET FORTH IN STANDARD STATEMENT. KAMEL KNEW
NOTHING ABOUT SUBJECT, BUT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES UNDERTOOK

STUDY AIDE MEMOIRE. GHALI EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN THAT IF GOE ACCEDES TO OUR DEMARCHE, THIS WILL AUTOMATICALLY REQUIRE IT ALLOW OTHER NATIONS' NPW'S TRANSIT CANAL AND GOE CANNOT BE SURE THEIR DESIGN AND OPERATION POSE NO SAFETY PROBLEM. REQUEST ANY INFO WE MAY HAVE RE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND ASSURANCES GIVEN BY BRITISH, FRENCH AND SOVIETS RE NPW'S. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING UP ON MY PERTINENT TALK WITH GAMASY (REF A), I TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF A MEETING TODAY WITH FONMIN KAMEL TO RAISE REFERENCED SUBJECT. MINSTATE BOUTROS GHALI AND KAMEL'S CHEF DE CABINET, AHMED MAHER, WERE PRESENT.

2. I FIRST TOLD KAMEL AND HIS COLLEAGUES ABOUT MY TALK WITH GAMASY ON U.S. NPW TRANSIT OF THE SUEZ CANAL. STRESSED OUR VIEW THAT RIGHT OF FREE TRANSIT FOR WARSHIPS, REGARDLESS OF MEANS OF PROPULSION, IS GUARANTEED IN CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION OF 1888. AS I HAD MENTIONED TO GAMASY, WE APPRECIATE CONCERN THAT SOME MAY HAVE ABOUT SAFETY ASPECTS OF SUCH TRANSITS. HOWEVER, OUTSTANDING SAFETY RECORD THAT U.S. NPW'S HAVE HAD IN THEIR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS OF OPERATION SHOULD REASSURE GOE ON THIS SCORE. I THEN WENT THROUGH ALL THE POINTS IN PARA 5 OF REF B AND LEFT WITH KAMEL A COPY OF SAME AIDE MEMOIRE I HAD EARLIER TODAY SENT TO GAMASY. ALSO GAVE HIM COPY OF STANDARD STATEMENT, WHICH I NOTED

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REPRESENTS UNILATERAL USG ASSURANCE TO HOST COUNTRIES, AND A COPY OF U.S. PUBLIC LAW 93-513.

3. TOLD HIM I UNDERSTOOD GAMASY PLANS TO SEND KAMEL A REPORT OF OUR MEETING WITH THE RECOMMENDATION THAT MFA CONVENE A MEETING OF INTERESTED GOE MINISTERS TO CONSIDER THE QUESTION. I URGED THAT KAMEL AND HIS STAFF STUDY OUR AIDE MEMOIRE, STANDARD STATEMENT AND P.L. 93-513 AND SATISFY THEMSELVES THAT TRANSIT OF SUEZ CANAL BY U.S. NPW'S POSES NO SAFETY HAZARDS. FINALLY, I EMPHASIZED IMPORTANCE USG ATTACHES TO TRANSIT OF U.S. NPW'S AND EXPRESSED HOPE THAT KAMEL WILL SUPPORT GAMASY IN RECOMMENDING TO HIS MINISTERIAL COLLEAGUES THAT FREE PASSAGE OF U.S. NPW'S THROUGH SUEZ CANAL BE ALLOWED SUBJECT TO ADEQUATE UNILATERAL ASSURANCES.

4. KAMEL KNEW NOTHING ABOUT THE ISSUE AND ASKED GHALI AND MAHER IF NPW'S ARE NOW TRANSITING THE CANAL. MAHER RECALLED THE BRITISH SUBMARINE "DREADNOUGHT" CASE, NOTING GOE HAD DECLINED TO ALLOW HER TO TRANSIT BECAUSE OF UNCERTAINTY RE SAFETY ASPECTS. I SAID I UNDERSTOOD GOE TURNDOWN WAS A TEMPORARY ONE PENDING STUDY OF SAFETY

ASPECTS, AND MAHER CONFIRMED THAT THIS IS IN FACT GOE POSITION. I MENTIONED THAT IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THIS GOE CONCERN THAT I HAD PROVIDED LENGTHY AIDE MEMOIRE AND STANDARD STATEMENT, WHICH LAY OUT EXEMPLARY SAFETY SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO U.S. NPW'S. IN THIS CONNECTION, I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT U.S. NPW'S FREELY TRANSIT THE PANAMA CANAL.

5. GHALI ASKED IF BRITISH, FRENCH OR SOVIET NPW'S ARE SIMILARLY DESIGNED AND OPERATED TO INSURE SAFETY. HE MENTIONED, IN THIS CONNECTION, THAT WHATEVER DECISION GOE MAKES IN RESPECT TO OUR DEMARCHE MUST APPLY TO NPW'S OF ALL NATIONS. THIS IS CONSISTENT WITH CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION. FOR EXAMPLE, EVEN THOUGH U.S. NPW'S MIGHT

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BE SAFE, HOW COULD GOE BE SURE THAT THE SAME IS TRUE OF BRITISH, FRENCH OR SOVIET NPW'S. I SAID I HAD NO INFORMATION ON DESIGN AND OPERATION OF BRITISH, FRENCH OR SOVIET NPW'S. NOR DID I KNOW WHAT, IF ANY, TYPE OF ASSURANCES THOSE COUNTRIES MAY GIVE. SPEAKING PURELY PERSONALLY, HOWEVER, IT SEEMED TO ME THAT GOE COULD INSIST THAT SUCH NPW TRANSIT OF THE SUEZ CANAL BE SUBJECT TO UNILATERAL SAFEGUARDS SUCH AS THOSE CONTAINED IN OUR STANDARD STATEMENT. SUCH A POSITION, IT SEEMED TO ME, WOULD NOT BE INCONSISTENT WITH FREE-TRANSIT-OF-WARSHIP PROVISION OF CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION.

6. ALTHOUGH GHALI CONTINUED TO BE TROUBLED ABOUT THE BLANKET EFFECT ACCEPTANCE OF OUR DEMARCHE WOULD HAVE, KAMEL AND HE UNDERTOOK TO STUDY OUR AIDE MEMOIRE AND ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTS. I INVITED THEM TO LET ME KNOW IF THEY HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS.

7. I PLAN NEXT TO CALL ON DEPUTY PRIMIN SULTAN TO DISCUSS SUBJECT AND THEREAFTER, DEPENDING ON WHETHER MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC AFFAIRS IS STILL INVOLVED IN ATOMIC AFFAIRS, ON MINISTER HELMY.

8. COMMENT: GIVEN GHALI'S CONCERN, COULD DEPT/DOD/U.S. NAVY PROVIDE ANY PERTINENT INFORMATION ABOUT SAFEGUARDS AND PROCEDURES USED BY BRITISH, FRENCH AND/OR SOVIET NPW'S. ALSO, I ASSUME WE WOULD HAVE NO OBJECTION IF GOE MADE FREE-PASSAGE-OF-WARSHIPS PROVISION OF CONSTANTINOPLE CONVENTION APPLICABLE TO NPW'S ONLY IF ACCEPTABLE UNILATERAL (OR OTHER) ASSURANCE IS OBTAINED. PLEASE ADVISE. EILTS. UNQUOTE VANCE

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